

Stretch to Stay Healthy and Help Prevent Overexertion Injuries



Overexertion is one of the **top** contributing factors for injuries at BNSF Railway. Performing stretches before beginning a task—and throughout your work day—can help prevent injuries such as muscle strain, joint overextension and inflamed connective tissue.

Aside from helping keep you safe at work, the benefits of stretching on a daily basis include improved posture, stress reduction and improved circulation.

Questions and Answers For Discussion

❑ Why should you incorporate stretching into your daily routine?

- Stretching on a regular basis is important for good health — both at work and at home. A consistent stretching practice can improve your performance of physical activities and enable your muscles to work most effectively.
- Stretching before a task reduces the risk of muscle strain injuries by reducing fatigue, improving muscular balance and posture, and improving muscle coordination.
- Stretching also helps improve flexibility and increase the range of motion of your joints.

❑ How often should I stretch during the work day?

- Before beginning a task, stretch the muscle groups that will be involved in the work to be performed, following the approved **BNSF Stretches** recommendations.
- You should also stretch throughout the day as needed, particularly if you've been stationary for more than 20 minutes, such as after coming back from lunch. A good rule of thumb is to stretch every 20 to 30 minutes during the day.
- If your job is sedentary, i.e., you sit at a desk for most of your day, it is recommended that you take a short break to stretch at least once every hour you spend at your work station.

❑ How do I stretch safely?

- Breathe normally—don't hold your breath — holding each stretch for around 30 seconds or until you feel muscle tension release.
- Keep the stretch mild and comfortable. Expect to feel tension while stretching, but not pain.
- If it hurts, stop the stretch. You should never feel pain during or after a stretch.
- Stretch in a smooth motion, without bouncing. (Bouncing can injure the muscle.)



Physical exertion can be a very positive aspect to our daily lives. However, if we exceed our capabilities, we run the risk of overexertion and injury. Always consider your limits before beginning any strenuous activity.

See your physician if at any time you have difficulty performing these stretches or are unsure whether pain, medical issues or previous surgeries could make certain stretches uncomfortable to perform.